

display object if the programmed memory were incorporated into the electronic gaming apparatus.

The features and advantages of the present invention will be apparent to those of ordinary skill in the art in view of the detailed description of various embodiments, which is made with reference to the drawings, a brief description of which is provided below.

Brief Description of the Drawings

Fig. 1 is a block diagram of an embodiment of a gaming system in accordance with the invention;

Fig. 2 is a perspective view of an embodiment of one of the gaming units shown schematically in Fig. 1;

Fig. 2A illustrates an embodiment of a control panel for a gaming unit;

Fig. 3 is a block diagram of the electronic components of the gaming unit of Fig. 2;

Fig. 4 is a flowchart of an embodiment of a main routine that may be performed during operation of one or more of the gaming units;

Fig. 5 is a flowchart of an alternative embodiment of a main routine that may be performed during operation of one or more of the gaming units;

Fig. 6 is an illustration of an embodiment of a visual display that may be displayed during performance of the video poker routine of Fig. 8;

Fig. 7 is an illustration of an embodiment of a visual display that may be displayed during performance of the video blackjack routine of Fig. 9;

Fig. 8 is a flowchart of an embodiment of a video poker routine that may be performed by one or more of the gaming units;

Fig. 9 is a flowchart of an embodiment of a video blackjack routine that may be performed by one or more of the gaming units;

Fig. 10 is an illustration of an embodiment of a visual display that may be displayed during performance of the slots routine of Fig. 12;

Fig. 11 is an illustration of an embodiment of a visual display that may be displayed during performance of the video keno routine of Fig. 13;

Fig. 12 is a flowchart of an embodiment of a slots routine that may be performed by one or more of the gaming units;

Fig. 13 is a flowchart of an embodiment of a video keno routine that may be performed by one or more of the gaming units;

Fig. 14 is an illustration of an embodiment of a visual display that may be displayed during performance of the video bingo routine of Fig. 15;

Fig. 15 is a flowchart of an embodiment of a video bingo routine that may be performed by one or more of the gaming units;

Fig. 16 is an illustration of a visual display that may be displayed when one or more of the gaming units performs the novel display technique;

Fig. 16a is an illustration of a portion of a visual display that may be displayed when one or more of the gaming units performs the novel display technique;

Fig. 17 is a flowchart of a display technique routine that may be performed by one or more of the gaming units;

Fig. 18 is an illustration of a visual display that may be displayed when one or more of the gaming units performs the novel display technique; and

Fig. 19 is an illustration of a visual display that may be displayed when one or more of the gaming units performs the novel display technique.

Detailed Description of Various Embodiments

Fig. 1 illustrates an embodiment of a gaming system 10 in accordance with the invention. Referring to Fig. 1, the gaming system 10 may include a first group or network 12 of gaming units 20 operatively coupled to a network computer 22 via a network data link or bus 24. The gaming system 10 may include a second group or network 26 of gaming units 30 operatively coupled to a network computer 32 via a network data link or bus 34. The first and second gaming networks 12, 26 may be operatively coupled to each other via a network 40, which may comprise, for example, the Internet, a wide area network (WAN), or a local area network (LAN) via a first network link 42 and a second network link 44.

The first network 12 of gaming units 20 may be provided in a first casino, and the second network 26 of gaming units 30 may be provided in a second location located in a separate geographic location than the first casino. For example, the two casinos may be located in different areas of the same city, or they may be located in different states. The network 40 may include a plurality of network computers or server computers (not shown), each of which may be operatively interconnected. Where the network 40 comprises the Internet, data communication may take place over the communication links 42, 44 via an Internet communication protocol.

The network computer 22 may be a server computer and may be used to accumulate and analyze data relating to the operation of the gaming units 20. For example, the network computer 22 may continuously receive data from each of the gaming units 20 indicative of the dollar amount and number of wagers being made on each of the gaming units 20, data indicative of how much each of the gaming units 20 is paying out in winnings, data regarding the identity and gaming habits of players playing each of the gaming units 20, etc. The network computer 32 may be a server computer and may be used to perform the same or different functions in relation to the gaming units 30 as the network computer 22 described above.

Although each network 12, 26 is shown to include one network computer 22, 32 and four gaming units 20, 30, it should be understood that different numbers of computers and gaming units may be utilized. For example, the network 12 may include a plurality of network computers 22 and tens or hundreds of gaming units 20, all of which may be interconnected via the data link 24. The data link 24 may provided as a dedicated hardwired link or a wireless link. Although the data link 24 is shown as a single data link 24, the data link 24 may comprise multiple data links.

Fig. 2 is a perspective view of one possible embodiment of one or more of the gaming units 20. Although the following description addresses the design of the gaming units 20, it should be understood that the gaming units 30 may have the same design as the gaming units 20 described below. It should be understood that the design of one or more of the gaming units 20 may be different than the design of other gaming units 20, and that the design of one or more of the gaming units 30 may be different than the design of other gaming units 30. Each gaming unit 20 may be any type of